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Resist U.S. imperialist war threats on Iran

By Sara Flounders

There is growing apprehension that through miscalculation, deliberate provocation or a staged false flag operation, a U.S. war with Iran is imminent.

The dangerous combination of top U.S. officials' public threats, the Pentagon's massive military deployment, continued drone flights and industrial sabotage against Iran provides an ominous warning. The corporate media have been more than willing to cheer industrial sabotage, computer viruses and targeted assassinations. War maneuvers with Israel scheduled for mid-January were suddenly postponed Jan. 15 until May or later.

The U.S. Congress overwhelmingly voted to include binding provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act, and President Obama signed the legislation Dec. 31 ordering Iran's economic strangulation. These NDAA provisions demand that every other country in the world joins this economic blockade of Iran or face U.S. sanctions themselves. This itself is an act of war.

Iran has directly charged the CIA for the Jan. 11 assassination of physicist Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, which has outraged Iranians. Roshan is the fourth scientist killed in five targeted assassination in two years.

Whether or not a war will actually erupt, it is essential to look at the powerful forces that lay the groundwork for such a conflagration.

A U.S. war would kill hundreds of thousands of Iranians and create regionwide destabilization. It would cause a wild, speculative hike in oil and gas prices, devastating fragile economies of the poorest countries and unhinging the increasingly shaky eurozone.

Revolutionary Marxists like Fidel Castro, political leaders in China and Russia, and even a hardened Israeli general have joined many political commentators

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Cuts in benefits spur fightback

By Joe Piette
Philadelphia

Pennsylvania has declared war on the poor. During the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression, two recent state decisions have made it more difficult to qualify for programs that benefit the working poor and those without jobs.

On Jan. 10, the Department of Public Welfare announced that people under 60 with more than $2,000 in savings and other assets would no longer be eligible for the food stamp program — the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. For people over 60, the assets limit would be $3,250.

Homes and retirement benefits would not be counted as assets. One vehicle would be exempt, but any additional vehicle worth more than $4,650 would be counted.

A senior center worker told Workers World that a DPW staff person said that

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MLK DAY FOR JOBS & JUSTICE 5-7

- **BOSTON** 'Save our post office!'
- **NEW YORK** Occupiers arrested
- **BALTIMORE** Civil rights march to D.C.
- **HOUSTON** Abolish the death penalty

BALTIMORE VICTORY AT LUNCH COUNTER
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NIGERIA STRIKE 8 **LATIN AMERICA** greets Iran leader 9 **KOREA** solidarity north & south 11

Free Mumia campaign intensifies

By Jamila Wilson
Philadelphia

"It is our job to give people hope and help people see this is people power. We are winners. We can never be discouraged."

These words from the ever-present representative of people power, Pam Africa, minister of confrontation with the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, kicked off a Jan. 8 organizing meeting for the Free Mumia Campaign.

Educators for Mumia, Millions for Mumia, the International Action Center and other grassroots organizations joined Concerned Family and Friends at the Calvary Church in Philadelphia to discuss the next steps to win Abu-Jamal's release from prison. Major initiatives have been established for local, national and international actions around the Free Mumia Campaign.

Organizing on the local level includes holding Seth Williams, Philadelphia's district attorney, accountable to former District Attorney Lynne Abraham's pledge to "release people" when issues of corruption and police misconduct occur in the judicial system, as is the case for Abu-Jamal.

The local initiative also includes a "meet Mumia" project. "People don't really know who Mumia Abu-Jamal is ... they need to get to know him as a person," said Kevin Price of the local organizing group.

The group also discussed how they would influence communities' conversations to include Abu-Jamal's name and case by circulating Mumia's "Message to the Movement" statement to the Occupy Wall Street movement, as well as promoting his latest book, "Classroom and the Cell."

On the national front, a pledge campaign "to Occupy for Mumia and End Mass Incarceration" will kick off organizing efforts for a national rally and protest on April 24, when activists will descend upon Washington, D.C., to occupy the Department of Justice for Mumia.

The pledge campaign is designed to engage different constituents, including youth, religious groups and public figures, to lend their voice and support for the Occupy for Mumia and End Mass Incarceration movement. Another key constituent being engaged is the national Occupy movement, by establishing Occupy for Mumia and Mass Incarceration working groups within local general assemblies throughout the U.S.

The international campaign shared its plan for actions to help maintain the momentum of various efforts to free Mumia, including those of public figures who have already come out in support of Abu-Jamal's release, such as former Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

"This is an internationalist movement. Mumia is a true internationalist," Suzanne Ross from the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC) explained.

International law and its standards on torture identify psychological torture as more than 15 days in solitary confinement. A petition campaign against torture, supported by the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, will be among the many projects undertaken by this working group.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Maiga Milbourne at Jan. 8 meeting.

Update on Mumia's status

Johanna Fernandez with Educators for Mumia shared information about Abu-Jamal's status. "On Dec. 14 around 4 a.m., Mumia was taken out of his cell on death row at SCI-Greene, surrounded by armed guards, including at least one holding a machine gun to his head, shackled and put onto a bus, with no idea where he was being taken.

"It turned out to be SCI-Mahanoy, which is about two hours from Philadelphia, but midway through this early morning trip, the bus stopped at Rockview prison, where executions are carried out. There Mumia was put on a second bus, under similar circumstances as the first, and transported to Mahanoy."

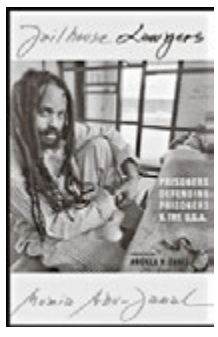
Fernandez said that since being transported to SCI-Mahanoy, Mumia has been placed in administrative custody (A.C.), which is reserved for prisoners with disciplinary problems. After holding him nearly 30 days in A.C., SCI-Mahanoy administrators now claim, under pressure from a growing campaign demanding he be released into the general population, that the disciplinary problem "is Abu-Jamal's insistency on not cutting his hair." Mumia has kept his hair in dreadlocks his entire 30 years on death row.

Abu-Jamal told Fernandez, "When I was on death row, I had a dozen men around me in torturous conditions, but at SCI-Mahanoy I realized that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of men in A.C. being tortured. The U.S. could do what they did in prisons in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay because they had already been doing this in prisons at home."

Fernandez reported that Abu-Jamal is kept in shackles whenever he is outside his cell, a very limited amount of time each day. "He wants the movement to include not just a demand for his release, but an end to the practice of isolation cells, also known as 'the hole,'" said Fernandez.

A Jan. 22 meeting will continue with planning and outreach for these three campaigns. Organizations and individuals interested in learning more about Abu-Jamal's case and ways to get involved can visit www.freemumia.com and www.millions4mumia.org.

Petitions to demand Abu-Jamal's immediate release into general population are available through the International Action Center at www.IACenter.org and through change.org at www.change.org/petitions/transfer-and-assign-mumia-abu-jamal-to-general-population. □



JAILHOUSE LAWYERS

Prisoners defending prisoners v. the U.S.A.

by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Available at: freemumia.com/?page_id=60 and bookstores around the country

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Workers World

55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
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E-mail: ww@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
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Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Kris Hamel, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
West Coast Editor: John Parker
Contributing Editors: Abayomi Azikiwe, Greg Butterfield, Jaimeson Champion, G. Dunkel, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Cheryl LaBash, Milt Neidenberg, Bryan G. Pfeifer, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Gloria Rubac
Technical Staff: Sue Davis, Shelley Ettinger, Bob McCubbin, Maggie Vascassenno
Mundo Obrero: Carl Glenn, Teresa Gutierrez, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Donna Lazarus, Michael Martínez, Carlos Vargas
Supporter Program: Sue Davis, coordinator

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National Office
55 W. 17 St.
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 5565
Atlanta, GA 30307
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443.909.8964
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.522.6626
Fax 617.983.3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313.459.0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
331 W. Main St., Ste. 408
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
1905 Rodeo Rd.
Los Angeles, CA 90018
la@workers.org
323.515.5870

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585.436.6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92163
619.692.0355
sandiego@workers.org

San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco
CA 94103
415.738.4739
sf@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

Milwaukee activists say

‘Banks, politicians created this mess!’

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee

Members of the Occupy Coalition in Milwaukee are participating in efforts in various neighborhoods to fight back against the racist banks and corporations and the foreclosed and abandoned properties they are responsible for creating.

The coalition includes Occupy Milwaukee, Occupy Riverwest and Occupy The Hood, an African-American group based in Milwaukee’s North Side. Individual members of this coalition include union workers from the Amalgamated Transit Union and the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, students from universities, technical colleges and high schools, and unemployed workers.

On Jan. 9, members of the coalition visited the neighborhood in and around 20th Street and Meinecke Avenue, an African-American neighborhood in Milwaukee decimated by anti-union attacks, plant and school closings, foreclosures, police brutality, and other criminal acts by the banks and corporations.

Occupy members cleaned up trash with neighborhood residents, knocked on doors and distributed literature demanding a moratorium on foreclosures, living-wage jobs and affordable, quality housing.

In just over an hour, Occupy activists and area residents picked up more than 40 bags of trash in just a few blocks. They piled this trash in front of an abandoned house and tacked a banner on it that read, “Banks and Politicians Created This Mess.”

On Jan. 14, the Occupy members returned to the North Side to conduct a similar cleanup with neighborhood residents. They also did banner drops. Occupy The Hood, in tandem with this aspect of the campaign, is also supporting Muhammad Mahdi as candidate for 5th District county supervisor. Mahdi is participating in all of the Occupy events in Milwaukee.

Moratorium on foreclosures and evictions

In tandem with the neighborhood cleanups, the Occupy Coalition is planning a series of actions for the winter and spring. These actions will have a main focus of fighting the foreclosures and evictions which are devastating neighborhoods throughout the entire Milwaukee metropolitan region, with the worst effects in Black and Latino/a communities.

According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel’s “Data On Demand” database, there have been more than 20,000 foreclosures in Milwaukee scheduled for sheriff’s sale since 2007. The highest number of foreclosures to ever take place in Wisconsin occurred in September 2011, just four months ago.

Thousands more homeowners in the state are in peril of losing their homes and thousands of renters face being evicted. The loss of property taxes from these homes comes at the same time massive budget cuts and public sector union busting, along with other attacks on poor and working people, are underway in Wisconsin.

WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

Neighborhood clean-up in Milwaukee.

The Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement, one of the organizations participating in Occupy Coalition activities in Milwaukee, is sponsoring a community organizing meeting on Feb. 25 called “Join the Fight to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & ‘Debt Service’ to the Banks.”

Jerry Goldberg of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition in Detroit will speak at this meeting and describe the group’s work in defense of people facing foreclosure and eviction. He will address the urgent need for a federal moratorium or halt on foreclosures and evictions, as well as the need for a federal jobs program. The role of the banks in the ongoing crisis and how to fight back against them will be part of the discussion.

WI BOPM activists are speaking at several events about the moratorium demand, including at a Jan. 16 Occupy Appleton Community Foreclosure Defense meeting and on Jan. 28 at an Occupy Green Bay people’s organizing meeting. For more information on these events and more, contact wibailoutpeople@gmail.com or visit www.wibailoutpeople.org. □

Detroiters plan rally against Citibank eviction

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs is spearheading an effort to save a popular downtown Detroit establishment located at 1515 Broadway. Besides being the residence of owner and proprietor Christopher Jaszczak (pronounced “jay-sik”) and his son, “1515” also serves as a theater, cafe, studio, coffee house, sound stage and meeting hall. The building provides meeting space for Occupy Detroit and other community activists.

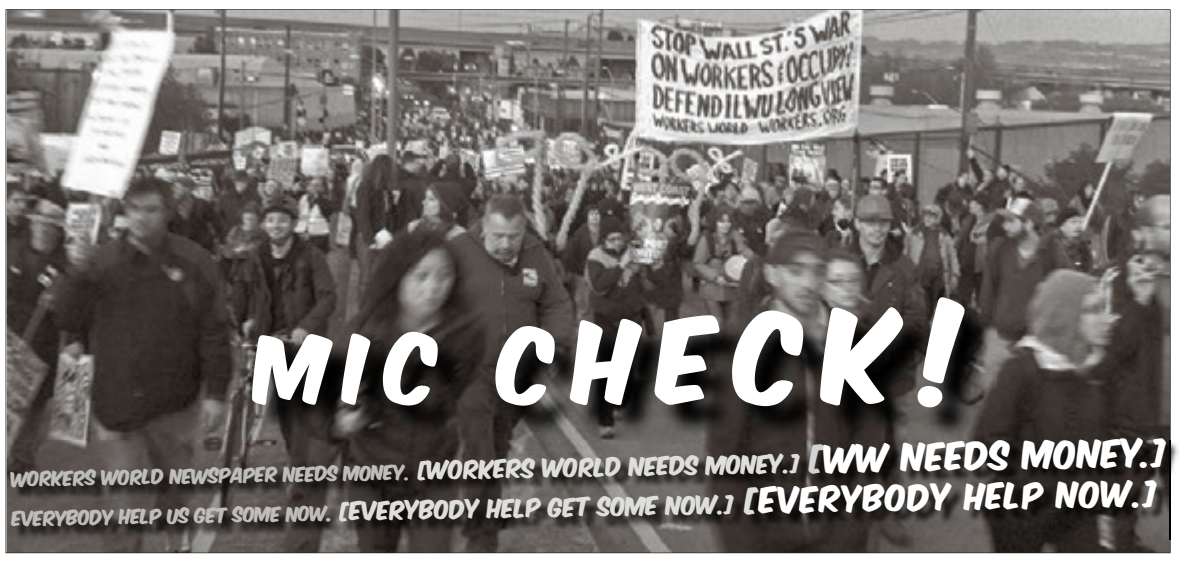
Like hundreds of thousands of other Michigan residents and families, Jaszczak faced financial hardship from 2008 to 2010. He fell behind on his Citibank mortgage loan with its 11.25 percent interest rate. The building went into foreclosure and now Jaszczak is threatened with eviction.

Moratorium NOW!, along with the People Before Banks Coalition, Occupy Detroit and Occupy Our Homes, has called for a community rally at 1515 Broadway on Jan. 26 at 6 p.m.

A leaflet issued for this rally explains: “Chris Jaszczak’s income has recovered. He has made a reasonable offer to Citibank to pay down the arrearages if they would restore his mortgage at a standard interest rate. But Citi, a bank that has received tens of billions of dollars in federal taxpayer bailouts on express condition that they aid borrowers, would rather destroy a community institution than deal equitably with Chris. 1515 Broadway is now facing an imminent eviction.”

Organizers are urging the public to contact Citibank to demand it stop the eviction and reinstate Christopher Jaszczak’s mortgage at 1515 Broadway in Detroit. Please email Citigroup CEO Vikram Pandit at vikram.pandit@citi.com and Citi Property Holdings President Richard Isenberg at richard.isenberg@citi.com. Call Pandit’s cell phone at 646-512-4269 and Citigroup at 212-816-6000 (ask for Richard Isenberg).

For more information and to get involved in the struggle to save 1515 Broadway, call Moratorium NOW! at 313-744-7912 or visit www.moratorium-mi.org. □



You who are reading this are our comrades. We’ve been with you in the occupations, from Zuccotti Park to Oakland. We’ve walked a hundred picket lines together. You want us to reach more of your friends, your co-workers, your neighbors, your cell-mates with the truth about capitalism.

You want them to understand that fighting this system is the most important thing they can do with their lives. You want our movement to grow so that, in the words of the old song, “We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.”

That’s from the old union favorite, “Solidarity Forever.” That’s what WW is all about. Building solidarity among the workers and all the oppressed, worldwide. We’re up against a profit system that constantly tries to divide and pit us against one another. It hides our achievements while glorifying those who exploit us. But in the pages of Workers World, our sisters and brothers can read about what OUR side is doing to come together against bigotry and oppression in order to WIN.

They can learn some history, too. About how anticolonial revolutions allowed countries like Libya, Iraq and Iran to develop, and why the imperialists fear this so much they try to destroy them. About today’s crisis of global capitalism that isn’t going away because this economic system can no longer absorb the “excess” hundreds of millions of workers left jobless by new technologies.

Workers World is one of the very few U.S. newspapers on the left that every week puts out both a print and an online edition.

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Rejecting privatization

Community group sits in over school 'reform'

By Eric Struch
Chicago

Parents, students and teachers in Chicago are resisting a long-lasting campaign against public education that has led to the closing of 200 schools over the last 20 years.

On Jan. 4, activists from the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization began a sit-in at City Hall demanding a meeting with Mayor Rahm Emmanuel. From the very first day, they were threatened with arrest. After six days of sitting in while the mayor refused to meet with them, the group ended the action, vowing to pursue other avenues in the struggle against privatization and educational apartheid.

Jenette Teller-Smith, a parent leader of the community group, had this to say of the privatization program undertaken by the Chicago Public Schools system:

"Parents, teachers, students and communities reject the CPS failed reforms. We know that only 18 percent of the replacement schools perform well. Most of these schools are selective enrollment, run by CPS. Nearly 40 percent of the new schools are at performance level three, CPS's lowest rating. We see through the sound bites: You've betrayed us, you've betrayed the public's trust. You have failed Chicago's children. ... We value people over profits. Mayor Rahm Emmanuel, shame on you."

Privatization means the theft by corporations of wealth and resources that belong to the working class. The rich, who have stolen workers' homes through the foreclosure crisis, vacuumed cash out of our pockets through the vast expansion of consumer credit during the 1990s, and who now have their eyes on our Social Security, have also turned Chicago into a laboratory for the privatization of public education.

Eight years ago, Mayor-for-Life Richard M. Daley and CPS head Arne Duncan cooked up a plan to steal the public school system and turn it into anti-union, for-profit charter schools. Duncan, who seems to think CPS stands for Close Public Schools, dubbed this plan Renaissance 2010. Duncan prefers calling it "market-based choice" over "privatization" so people are less likely to notice that the privately owned and operated charters are still funded through the workers' tax dollars.

Duncan did such a good job destroying public education in Chicago that the Obama administration put him in charge of implementing a nearly identical plan nationally, called Race to the Top.

At the Democratic National Convention in August 2008, union teachers were Barack Obama's largest single group of delegates. The anti-union war on public education is how the administration has repaid them for their loyal support.

Renaissance 2010 was the official opening of what many have called the era of educational apartheid in Chicago, but the CPS privatization plan predated the Duncan regime. Daley touted charter schools as if they were some sort of solution to the perennial funding crisis faced by the public schools in Chicago. But this lack of funds for schools is the real problem that no one in the capitalist media seems to be allowed to talk about.

Karen Lewis, president of the Chicago Teachers Union, points out that "in the last 20 years, CPS has closed over 200 schools and placed 300 on probation." As is usually the case, school closings hit nationally oppressed communities much harder than the more affluent white communities.

In the historic Black community of Bronzeville on the city's South Side, which was the home of Chicago's version of the Harlem Renaissance, families have been hit particularly hard by the closings. With the destruction of public housing by the Chicago Housing Authority as the backdrop, 15 Bronzeville schools have been closed over the last 12 years. Students have been transferred to different schools, some of them two or even three times.

These school closures do nothing but further destabilize already marginalized communities. This is the educational component of the war on Black communities.

All sorts of cronyism, corruption and incompetence are behind the privatization drive. For example, CPS chief administrative officer, Tim Cawley, was a managing director at the Academy of Urban School Leadership. The Chicago School Board now wants AUSL to take over schools targeted for closure.

Only one Chicago School Board member has any actual classroom experience. The school board itself is untouched by democracy — it isn't even elected. □

PENNSYLVANIA

State cuts precipitate school crisis

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The crisis in education under capitalism is being felt across the U.S. as funding is cut, teachers and other staff are laid off, and schools are closed. In Delaware County, Pa., south of Philadelphia, this problem is nearing a catastrophe.

The entire Chester Upland School District is on the verge of collapse, with teachers and other unionized staff forced to work for free. Pennsylvania's governor, Tom Corbett, is refusing to advance $18.7 million requested by the district to keep schools open through June. In a move education law experts describe as "unprecedented," around 3,700 students in the district may find themselves without instruction in the middle of a school year.

Chester Upland has one high school, two middle schools and six elementary schools. One of the poorest districts in the state, 72 percent of its students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches — more than double the state average.

Once a vibrant industrial area, Chester has been unable to recover from economic recessions in 1975 and 1982. Unemployment is officially more than 20 percent. With 25 percent of residents living below the poverty level, the predominantly African-American district has limited local tax resources to fund schools. Chester Upland now relies on the state for nearly 70 percent of its annual funding.

December's announcements that Sunoco and ConocoPhillips plan to close their Delaware County oil refineries in nearby Marcus Hook, laying off 1,000 workers, only add to the magnitude of this crisis.

Charter schools no solution

In 1994, the Chester Upland school district was faced with a multimillion-dollar deficit and named the worst performing school district in Pennsylvania. Control over the schools was taken over by the state. The for-profit Edison company was hired to run the schools. In 2001, then-Gov. Tom Ridge paid Edison $2.7 million for a study that also opened the way for Philadelphia schools to be privatized.

A combination of financial scandals and poor performance led the district to eventually break its contract with Edison, but state politicians did not abandon their push for private charter schools. Even though the local school board regained management in 2010, two selective-admission charter schools now enroll 45 percent of Chester Upland's students and receive 45 percent of the district's total operating budget.

One of these private schools, Chester Community, the largest charter in the state, is one of 89 under state investigation for irregularities in 2009 standardized test scores. The school was founded and operated by Vahan Gureghian, the largest single donor to Tom Corbett's 2010 gubernatorial campaign with more than $300,000 in contributions.

Crisis of governor's making

Corbett blames the Chester Upland school board for mismanaging their funds, and some politicians are suggesting that the state should once again assume control over the district, but this crisis is clearly of Corbett's own making.

His 2011 budget, passed on July 15, included statewide cuts of $961 million for Pre-K-12 education. This budget also eliminated the requirement that the state reimburse school districts for students attending charter schools.

Chester Upland was the district hardest hit by these cuts. According to the Education Law Center's analysis of the budget, total per student funding was cut by $2,542, eliminating $18.62 million, or 31.95 percent of state funding for this impoverished district. The district has 3,025 students enrolled in charter schools.

Having pushed for charter schools from day one of his administration, Corbett's deliberate underfunding of Chester Upland schools opens the door for total privatization of a district victimized by a similar scheme with Edison 10 years earlier. This policy is also similar to one pushed in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

No lack of money

There is no lack of money to fund this school district. Corbett has set aside more than $500 million for a "rainy day" fund. Clearly this situation would qualify. On a national level, Delaware County taxpayers' share of the 2012 Department of Defense budget is over $265 million. Costofwar.com estimates that these funds could pay salaries for 3,906 elementary school teachers.

Parents, students and staff have not been silent on this crisis. On Jan. 13, more than 120 high school students walked out of school in protest. The day before, an overflow crowd of several hundred packed a school district board meeting and later held a candlelight vigil when the meeting adjourned. Several people called for actions ranging from sit-ins at legislators' offices to rallies in Harrisburg, the state capital. □

Philadelphia

Students join nurses' fight against layoffs

High school students joined school nurses fighting against layoffs at their weekly protest in front of the Philadelphia School District headquarters on Jan. 11.

"Every day, 33,000 students attend schools that lack a registered nurse," Eileen DiFranco, a Roxborough High School nurse, told participants. Nurses are forced to work at several schools per week, and each RN is now responsible for 1,500 students on average.

"If there's no nurse, and you're sick, kids are just going to leave school," one high school student reported. "Basically, it's not fair for our students. We need our high school nurses," added her friend.

Protesters are demanding that the 47 nurses furloughed in December be returned to their assignments in the school district.

— Report and photo by Joe Piette

BOSTON

MLK protest hits post office closings

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

Occupy4Boston sent an express mail message to Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe for Martin Luther King Day: "Hands off our post office and our community!" Hundreds of community and labor activists picketed and rallied in the very heart of Boston's Black community on Jan. 14 at the Grove Hall Post Office in Roxbury. It is slated for shutdown by May.

Subfreezing temperatures did not deter people from coming out to defend their jobs and their post office, so sorely needed for services in the community. Charles Clemons of the radio station Touch 106.1, "the heart of the Black community," chaired the rally. The station broadcast the event live.

Minister Don Muhammad of Nation of Islam Mosque 11 opened the rally by declaring, "If Dr. King were alive, he would be here with us today, to say again, 'Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'"

Boston City Councillors Charles Yancy, Felix Arroyo, Tito Jackson, Ayanna Pressley and Frank Baker came to give their support. Yancy related his meeting with Dr. King in 1965 and pledged, "We cannot and will not stay silent while they are laying off people at the post office."

Miya X, representing the Women's Fightback Network, stressed, "The working class, the poor and our youth are fighting for survival. We need to occupy the MBTA! [Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority]. Our youth are suffering from a 50 percent unemployment rate and schools are being shut down in the Black community."

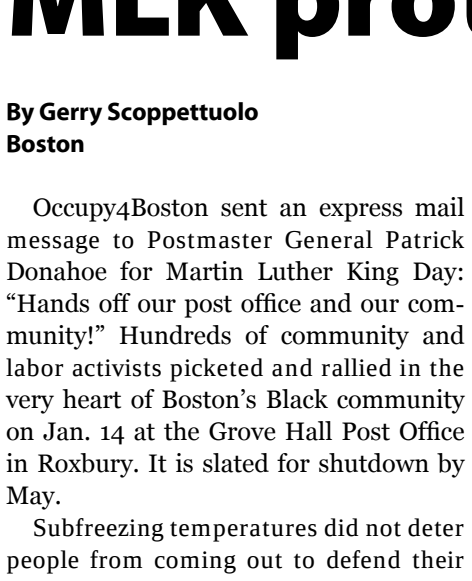
The rally marked the emergence of a new community/labor coalition in Boston — Occupy4Jobs — which is organizing with broad and deep support. The post office struggle has enraged many communities in greater Boston and around the country, as that agency moves to privatize a public sector workforce that has provided good union jobs to hundreds of thousands of workers, many of them in oppressed communities. The Occupy4Jobs Network is organizing community/labor coalitions in Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City and San Francisco at breakneck speed as worker anger mounts nationally.

Unions brought out their members to the rally in significant numbers. Paul Kilduff, president of the 2200 member-strong Metro Local 100 of the American Postal Workers Union, while defending dozens of post offices in his jurisdiction, was nevertheless mindful of the impact on Roxbury residents. Under the proposed closings, thousands of people will have to take two buses to the nearest post office in Dudley Square. Kilduff called out: "Services that are desperately needed are being cut back. We will fight back. Whose post office? Our post office!"

Myles Calvey, business agent of International Electrical Workers union Local 2222, rallied the demonstrators with the support of his union, which is currently in a national contract struggle with Verizon Communications Inc. Steve Tolman, president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, pledged the support of his 400,000 statewide members.

Other speakers and endorsers included Alan Brown, of Occupy4Jobs; Alberto Borero, a Puerto Rican activist; Stevan Kirschbaum, grievance committee chair of Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751; Ed Childs, chief shop steward of UNITE-HERE Local 26; Robert Fitzgerald, Service Employees Local 509; and Lynn Mesa, of Chelsea Uniting Against the War. □

2012 PHOTOS BY LIZ GREEN



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

A student at the nurses' protest against school cutbacks on Jan. 4.

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

LA area immigrant car washers to receive $1 million in back pay

Owners of eight carwashes in the Los Angeles area agreed Jan. 11 to a $1 million settlement to workers after failing to pay minimum wages or overtime for many years. The bosses routinely cheated the mostly Latino/a immigrant workers by creating false records of work hours and not paying wages to those who quit. Workers at two carwashes fought for and won union recognition by United Steelworkers Local 675 in 2011. In early November, a third wash agreed to the Local 675 contract signed by the previous owner. Workers at other carwashes have joined the CLEAN Carwash Campaign supported by the USW, the AFL-CIO and more than 100 community, faith and labor organizations in L.A. (blog.aflcio.org, Jan. 11)

First contract in 10 years for United flight attendants

United Airlines flight attendants negotiated their first contract since the airline filed for bankruptcy 10 years ago. Wages for the 15,000 workers will return to pre-bankruptcy levels, with 17.5 percent raises over the three-year contract. The workers, represented by the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA-CWA), will immediately get a 10 percent wage increase and a $5,000 signing bonus. The workers defeated hundreds of concessions, including changes in health care coverage and pay protections, and won protections against involuntary furloughs and increased work schedule flexibility. (afanet.org, Jan. 12)

Struggle over Indiana RTW law

Hundreds of unionized Indiana workers, mobilized by the state AFL-CIO, denounced Gov. Mitch Daniels when he promoted the anti-union, right-to-work law during his state of the state address Jan. 10. The next day laid-off workers from Oklahoma testified at a news conference about how the RTW law passed there in 2001 has meant the loss of a third of that state's manufacturing jobs in the past 10 years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Later that week, around 7,500 people marched into the Indianapolis statehouse, waving placards and shouting "Veto!" to protest the RTW bill passed by the Republican-dominated Legislature.

Noting that this year's Super Bowl will be played in Indianapolis, the National Football League Players Association issued a statement Jan. 6 that "it should be a time to shine in the national spotlight and highlight the hardworking families that make Indiana run instead of launching political attacks on their basic rights." The statement also noted a recent Economic Policy Institute report showing the RTW law would cut wages for Indiana workers by $1,500 a year. In addition, six NLF players from Indiana sent personal letters to legislators denouncing the RTW bill. (blog.aflcio.org, Jan. 6, 10, 11)

RNs at NYC's Mount Sinai Hospital ratify contract

Registered nurses at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan ratified a four-year contract Jan. 6 that includes wage increases of 8 percent, a $1,500 lump sum upon signing, and two payments of $600 in December 2013 and 2014 to offset new health care premium contributions. The two parties also agreed to make preventing workplace violence a high priority. This is the fourth major contract successfully negotiated by the New York State Nurses Association on behalf of more than 10,000 RNs in New York City hospitals in the last two months. (nysna.net, Jan. 6)

NBC technical staff negotiate contract

It took nearly three years since the contract of the Broadcast Employees union (NABET-CWA) expired on March 31, 2009, for the 2,500 technical staff, news writers, maintenance and staging personnel at NBC Universal to negotiate a contract without draconian concessions to network and local television stations in New York; Chicago; Burbank, Calif.; and Washington, D.C., as well as NBC News and NBC Sports. The three-year contract offers a total of 8 percent wage increases, a signing bonus, layoff protections for staff, and conversion of a number of daily-hire jobs into full-time staff positions. (nabetcwa.org, Jan. 12)

NLRB upholds class action suits for workers

The National Labor Relations Board ruled on Jan. 8 that employers cannot prevent workers from filing work-related group or class action legal suits against them. The ruling, which bans employment agreements forcing workers to individually pursue claims through arbitration, applies to all nonmanagement private sector workers, union and nonunion. It's estimated that more than 25 percent of nonunion workers have been forced to sign such agreements as a condition of employment. The Jan. 7 New York Times speculated that business organizations like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce will soon appeal the ruling. □

NEW YORK CITY

‘Occupy 4 Jobs’ action hits banks, stores

By LeiLani Dowell
New York

Several hundred spirited and militant activists held a series of people’s occupations around New York City’s Union Square in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Jan. 16. Six organizers with the newly formed Occupy 4 Jobs were arrested as occupations were held at banks, supermarkets and a drugstore.

The day began with a rally in Union Square, which is a major subway hub and busy shopping destination. The Rude Mechanical Orchestra opened by playing the Civil Rights standard “We Shall Overcome,” with some in the crowd singing and changing the words to “we shall occupy.” The orchestra also played “Which Side Are You On,” Bob Marley’s “Get Up, Stand Up,” and a portion of the working-class anthem the Internationale.

Larry Holmes of O4J explained the day’s action: “Many don’t know that in King’s last days, he opened up a new Civil Rights struggle — that of the right of everyone to a decent, paying job. It’s not surprising that the media, the powers that be, the 1% don’t remind us of that. But today we’re reviving that part of King’s dream.” Holmes noted that the protest was inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement, which has provided an opening for militant action in various struggles.

Gavrielle Gemma described O4J’s demand that the city declare an unemployment state of emergency. “One million are unemployed, while the city gives $7 billion to the banks tax-free and another $1 billion to real estate developers,” she said. “That $8 billion could provide 250,000 jobs with $40,000-a-year salaries and full health benefits.”

High-school student Dinae Anderson told those gathered: “I am a youth who is tired of unemployment. They say we’re supposed to be free in the U.S., but we’re not free of the capitalist state of mind. We’re not free of poverty. We’re not free of hunger.”

‘Banks got bailed out, we got sold out!’

The protesters then began to march around the square, first stopping at Citibank, where Million Worker March leader Charles Jenkins stressed the importance of challenging the banks that received billions in bailouts, while working and poor people continue to be neglected. Marchers chanted, “Banks got bailed out, we got sold out!”

From Citibank, the crowd marched around Union Square, ending up at the Bank of America. Four activists — Gemma, Holmes, Tony Murphy and Caleb Maupin — entered the bank and were surrounded by cops, who blocked other protesters from entering. Inside, they displayed large posters of Dr. King in the bank windows.

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

As the police cuff Occupy4Jobs protesters Larry Holmes, Gavrielle Gemma, Tony Murphy and Caleb Maupin in Bank of America, they ask: ‘Why aren’t you arresting the bankers who have stolen our jobs, our homes and our services?’

Protesters instantly formed a picket line in solidarity with the occupiers, chanting “Jobs, not jails,” “Stop and frisk is a crime!” and “Banks got bailed out, we got sold out.” After a standoff with the cops both inside and outside the bank, the four were arrested.

The remaining protesters continued on to Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s supermarkets. Both stores have been picketed previously for union-busting policies. At each stop, activists entered the store and did a “mic check” — in which one protester speaks and the others repeat the words. The speaker announced, “Happy Martin Luther King Day. A special greeting to all the workers. ... We know that most workers in stores like this are either part-time or temporary and paid low wages. These workers should have full-time jobs if they want them, and jobs that pay good wages.”

At the last stop, a Walgreen’s drugstore, police grabbed O4J organizer Toni Arenstein after she gave a mic check in solidarity with the unemployed and underemployed. As protesters rushed to her defense, she and O4J organizer Tim Barker were arrested.

Participating organizations in the action included Occupy Harlem, La Peña del Bronx, May 1st Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights, Occupy Wall Street, People’s Organization for Progress, Picture the Homeless, Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC), Workers World Party and the Transport Workers Union Local 100.

All six arrestees were released on Jan. 17. Charged with “criminal trespassing,” Gemma, Holmes, Maupin and Murphy have hearings on March 5. □

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Signs address many issues on Jan. 16 as members of the Occupy4Jobs march crowd around the entrance to Bank of America.

WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD

Reflection of giant poster celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day shines in the Bank of America window as protesters occupy the bank.

Cuts in benefits spur fightback

Continued from page 1

they are “just getting started,” and that state officials “indicate they are looking at asset tests for many programs, not just food stamps.”

The asset test comes on top of a Pennsylvania Unemployment Compensation law change that became effective on Jan. 1. Now severance payments above $18,000 will offset unemployment benefits until the severance is used up.

Most states do not count such benefits against unemployment benefits, recognizing that the extra cash often allows victims of the weak economy to continue payments on their mortgages and other debts. The state’s plan to enforce this statute has not been announced.

In Delaware, the entire severance, even if paid in a lump sum, is divided into weekly payments equal to the laid-off worker’s salary. Only after those weekly payments have ended can unemployment benefits start.

Fightback begins

A fightback movement is starting to emerge. An overflow crowd met at the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger offices on Jan. 13 to map out opposition to the asset test. Advocates for the poor and Philadelphia city officials have condemned it. Letters to the editor printed in major establishment newspapers and messages posted on Facebook evince opposition to this terrible rule. The Occupy Philly movement is taking up this issue.

The union representing county assistance workers has also criticized the state’s plan, which would require workers to review the assets of 1.8 million Pennsylvania residents who receive food stamps. “We already have a backlog of cases, and there’s purely not enough workers,” said Donna Scarboro, business agent for Services Employees union Local 668, to the Philadelphia Inquirer. The number of caseworkers statewide has been cut from 1,800 to 1,400 in the last three years. (Jan. 15)

Individual states administer SNAP programs and are permitted to apply asset tests as long as the minimum amount of assets is set no lower than $2,000. That limit has not been increased since 1980. If allowed to rise with inflation, that figure in 2012 would be $5,715.23. Four states have raised their minimum allowable assets to $5,000 or more.

There were 439,245 Philadelphians on food stamps as of December 2010, but only 71 percent of those eligible applied for food stamps. Across the U.S., 46.3 million people get SNAP benefits, which is one out of every seven residents.

The federal SNAP program sends $2.5 billion annually to Pennsylvania. This not only benefits needy children and seniors but is also a boon to the food industry. Every dollar of public funds spent on food stamps increases the gross domestic product by $1.73.

Because of the potential economic losses to businesses, even executives, such as Jeff Brown of Philadelphia ShopRite, have called the DPW decision “mean-spirited” and “bad business strategy.” Brown says that he will lose revenue as 40 percent of his sales depend on food stamps. (Philadelphia Inquirer, Jan. 10)

Overwhelmed emergency food agencies in the state oppose the new policy. Bill Clark, executive director of Philabundance, the largest hunger-relief agency in the region, told the Inquirer: “I’m very pessimistic about our ability to meet people’s needs ... this will

March for jobs & justice

40-mile trek scores people's victory

By Andre Powell
Baltimore-to-Washington, D.C.

Protesters scored a number of victories on the 40-mile March for Jobs & Justice to Washington, D.C. They began the Civil Rights march on Jan. 14 in Baltimore and were greeted by Occupy Washington, D.C., when they arrived on Jan. 16. Representatives of the group will remain for an Occupy Congress event on the National Mall, where protesters have vowed to set up a million tents.

The marchers' trek began at Union Baptist Church of Baltimore, where more than 100 people staged a march to Reads drugstore, which was the site of historic Civil Rights sit-ins in 1955. The city administration and big developers have slated to tear the site down, but community activists, led by those who actually participated in the sit-ins, want the site preserved to honor the Civil Rights Movement.

WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Dr. Helena Hicks, veteran of 1955 sit-ins.

When the group arrived in the downtown shopping area just blocks from Reads, police attempted to clear the street. When they grabbed Occupy 4 Jobs organizer Sharon Black, tearing the hood from her coat and pushing her to the sidewalk, they yelled, "We're going to make an example out of you! You'll be the first one on the sidewalk."

Marchers were defiant, refusing to move to the sidewalk, and continued in the street to the drugstore. Hundreds of shoppers cheered as they watched the group continue.

When the march arrived at the former drugstore, 77-year-old Dr. Helena Hicks got out of the lead vehicle. Thirteen police cars had surrounded the marchers, filling the block of Lexington Street.

Standing in the middle of the street, Dr. Hicks took the microphone and challenged police to arrest her, exclaiming, "We have a right to protest in these streets." She said there were fewer police at Reads when she participated in the 1955 sit-ins than today, and the police department and the city should be ashamed.

Dr. Hicks was a 20-year-old Morgan State University student when she, along with others, sat in at the drugstore to desegregate the chain that refused to serve African-American people at their lunch counter. Their protests were successful and helped usher in an era of struggle for the Civil Rights Movement in Baltimore.

The standoff between police and protesters continued for about 30 minutes. The group then continued with its plan to send off a smaller delegation to march to Washington, D.C. Fifty protesters began the walk under heavy surveillance by police, who had squad cars follow the group to Route 1.

'Jobs Not Jails' contingent marches through Baltimore.

WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

Protesters prevail at Burger King

The marchers had scheduled a meet-and-greet event with activists in Howard County at a local Burger King, about 15 miles outside Baltimore. Originally the local manager was friendly and welcoming to the group. But before the march arrived, the regional manager told local organizers that the group would not be welcomed or served, and that they could not even be in the parking lot, which was "private property."

Protesters began calling local and national news media. The group decided not to call off their rally and to go into the store as a group. The Rev. Cortly "C.D." Witherspoon, president of the Baltimore Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was the first to walk in, picket sign in hand. He was followed by the 50 protesters, accompanied by a newspaper reporter.

Burger King relented. The regional manager who put out the "no protesters" message greeted the marchers with a smile and served the group burgers and fries. One participant remarked, "You can tell he never works here. He doesn't know where things are behind the counter."

On Jan. 16, the group finally arrived at Occupy Washington, D.C., tired but elated. The walkers ranged in age from 19 to 71.

The Rev. Witherspoon summed up the sentiments of marchers: "We have won far more than just the tangible victory of bringing the needed attention to the issue of jobs and justice, stopping the police from violating our rights, and forcing Burger King to serve us. We have given hope to the jobless, hope to the youth who are looking for bigger solutions, and solidarity to our participants." □

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be a mind-boggling, self-inflicted wound. It makes no compassionate, political, or economic sense." For many elderly especially, $3,250 in the bank serves as "the poor man's medical insurance," he said.

Carey Morgan, executive director of the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, said: "So it's not only inhumane, but counterproductive to force people to drain their savings before they can get any help. Someone with less than $2,000 in the bank would easily be wiped out by one visit to the emergency room." (Philadelphia City Paper, Jan 10)

The state recently won a federal award for running its program efficiently, with a fraud rate of one-tenth of 1 percent, but food stamps have become a hot political issue. Right-wing Republicans vying to be their party's presidential candidate are appealing to their political adherents by whipping up racist attacks on oppressed communities as they call for cuts in food stamp programs — even though white workers and their families make up half of the benefits' recipients.

As Joel Berg, the executive director of the New York Coalition against Hunter has stressed, today the food stamp program is "the only thing left" in the safety net. The food stamp program is a necessity for working-class families in Pennsylvania and throughout the country during this economic crisis.

It must be defended by all progressive people and should be expanded without restrictions and limitations to everyone who needs food assistance. □

HOUSTON

Death penalty foes march on MLK Day

"Clarence Brandley!" boomed over the loud-speaker system, and the crowds lining the downtown sidewalks answered, "Pay him now!" The Texas Death Penalty Abolition movement honored Clarence Brandley in the 34th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Parade Jan. 16 in downtown Houston, sponsored by The Black Heritage Society.

Brandley, who is known and loved by African Americans as well as activists of all nationalities around Texas, was exonerated off Texas death row exactly 22 years ago. But he is still fighting for compensation from the state of Texas for the 10 long years that were stolen from him.

Abolitionists and progressive activists, along with their children, formed a spirited contingent in one of the largest MLK parades in the country. They not only demanded an end to the racist and anti-poor death penalty, but also demanded compensation for Brandley. Brandley and his brother, the Rev. Ozell Brandley, rode in the back of a pickup truck covered with signs about Clarence's struggle with Texas.

As children tossed candy to the crowds, activists distributed thousands of leaflets about Clarence Brandley and the death penalty, as well as leaflets about political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. In 1995, after five years of struggling to find and keep a job, Brandley went to Philadelphia to support Abu-Jamal when he had an execution date. Brandley says he was glad to contribute to another innocent man getting a stay of execution, just as others had done for him.

Today Brandley works with Witness To Innocence, an organization made up solely of people who have been exonerated off death row. (In the U.S., 130 people have been exonerated.) Brandley is fighting to abolish the death penalty in Texas. He says he will never forget his time on death row and will continue to fight for those he left behind.

— Report & photo by Gloria Rubac

General strike in Nigeria protests end to fuel subsidies

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

BULLETIN: On Jan. 16, under extreme government pressure, the Nigerian Labor Congress and the Trade Union Congress leaders ended a week-long general strike after the federal government cut gasoline prices from $3.51 to $2.27 per gallon. The original subsidized price was $1.70 per gallon. Other organizations have criticized the labor leaders' decision and said they will continue the dispute over the government's Jan. 1 decision to cancel fuel subsidies.

During the week of Jan. 9-15, millions of Nigerians supported a nationwide work stoppage demanding restoration of fuel subsidies. Hundreds of thousands joined protests in the capital of Lagos and other major cities throughout Africa's most populous state. The removal of the fuel subsidies resulted in the rise of petroleum prices by 120 percent.

Removing fuel subsidies causes inflation throughout the entire economy that threatens to make food, energy and rents even more unaffordable for the masses of workers and youth. Many of Nigeria's 155 million people survive on meager wages. Official unemployment is 23 percent. Imperialist financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund have pressured West Africa states to end petroleum subsidies.

During the week, the strike closed down ground transport and airline traffic in and out of the country. Although the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (Pengassan) had not officially joined the strike, there have been ongoing blockades of production facilities. On Jan. 12, Pengassan's leaders had pledged to shut down oil production on Jan. 16.

Although the two major trade union federations played the biggest role, mass organizations throughout the country supported the strike, including the Save Nigeria Group, Enough Is Enough (EiE) and the Civil Liberties Organization. Many vowed to continue the mobilization of the people for even larger street actions across the nation.

At a news conference in Lagos on Jan. 14, EiE executive director, Yemi Adamolekun, blamed the current crisis on President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, saying that "you can't add more money to a corrupt system and expect miracles." (Nigerian Guardian, Jan. 15)

CLO executive director, Ibuchukwu Ezike, told labor negotiators that the nationwide struggle in Nigeria is not solely about the demands of the unions: "CLO rejects all the arguments presented by the government in the defense of its action because it lacks logic and [they] are only fabricated to deceive Nigerians."

Sectional conflicts or national unity

On Jan. 9, just before the strike, the Jonathan government had declared "a state of emergency" in various regions, purportedly because of the outbreak of regional and religious violence during the Christmas holiday season. Several churches were bombed then, allegedly by the Boko Haram Islamic sect, which is based in the northeast of the country. There have also been retaliatory attacks on mosques and Koranic schools. Christian groups are suspected.

These sectional conflicts, which largely stem from the colonial era, when British imperialism deliberately divided the country along ethnic and regional lines, have spilled over into the current political atmosphere surrounding the general strike. Several groups have surfaced over the last two weeks which have threatened to rally in defense of the Jonathan government since he is originally from the south of Nigeria.

It is also suspected that attacks by a group of youth on members of the NLC, TUC and Civil Society Organizations in Imo state may be linked to the government or forces that are promoting a sectional agenda. The incidents left several supporters of the strike injured.

Other organizations have emphasized the need for mass national unity in the face of the current economic crisis. Christians and Muslims in Lagos joined together in a mass demonstration on Jan. 13 calling for the reinstatement of the fuel subsidies.

At the Gani Fawehinmi Freedom Park in Ojota, Lagos, people from various ethnoreligious backgrounds rallied in a show of united mass action. The Nigerian Nation newspaper reported that the rally "exhibited a rare unity of purpose." The crowd chanted, "Nigerians must come together. We must sink ethnic and religious differences. It is high time we laid emphasis on our common goals in order to forge greater unity and take this country to El Dorado." (Jan. 13)

Role of capitalist world crisis

Nigeria's role in the international oil industry is clearly related to the current struggle over the price of fuel for internal consumption. Nigeria produces more than 2 million barrels of crude oil per day, earning with it 90 percent of its foreign exchange. Yet the masses of people have received no benefits from these earnings.

Two key government portfolios are occupied by ministers who have close links with transnational oil corporations and international finance capital. The minister of petroleum resources, Diezani Alison-Madueke, came to the administration from the oil industry. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the minister of finance and coordinating minister for the economy, spent many years as a vice-president of the Washington-based World Bank. Okonjo-Iweala addressed the annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank during 2011, when she acknowledged the impact of the global market on economic policy within Nigeria.

An article in Nigeria Next newspaper noted, "Ghana has cut fuel subsidies following an increase in crude oil prices and the depreciation of the Ghana cedi currency ... Ghana, which joined the club of oil producers in West Africa last year, has come under increased pressure from the International Monetary Fund to remove the fuel subsidies. ... The IMF has urged countries across West and Central Africa to cut fuel subsidies. ... The past months have seen governments in Nigeria, Guinea, Cameroon and Chad moving to cut state subsidies on fuel." (Dec. 29)

These states remain firmly integrated into the world capitalist system, allowing imperialist financial institutions to pressure them to further the exploitation of the workers, farmers and youth. Until Africa breaks with world imperialism and utilizes its resources for the benefit of the masses of people, governments of countries that export strategic resources to the leading capitalist states will not be in a position to provide benefits to the majority of their populations. □

Resist U.S. imperialist war threats on Iran

Continued from page 1

to warn that a U.S. or U.S.-supported Israeli attack on Iran could quickly become a far wider war.

While defending its sovereign right to develop energy self-sufficiency, Tehran has made every effort to deflect U.S. threats and charges. Iran has submitted to years of intrusive inspections of its research and industrial facilities to confirm its compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

But Washington insists on stopping Iran's development — and not only its nuclear energy development to assure its future as oil production declines. For decades Iran was forced to import refined oil. Washington has tried to stop Iran from importing parts to build oil refineries, as it has tried to stop all Iran's development since the 1979 revolution.

The myth of stimulus from war

David Broder, Washington Post political correspondent for 40 years and news show pundit, described in an Oct. 31, 2010, article how Obama could deal with his weakened situation when the Republicans swept Congress. He argued that to fix the economy and regain popularity, the solution is obvious and unavoidable: "War with Iran."

Broder had more than 400 appearances on "Meet the Press." He even won a Pulitzer Prize. Broder could be counted on to reflect political thinking and planning in Washington. Only the war machine can pull the U.S. out of economic stagnation, Broder argued.

"Look back at FDR and the Great Depression," wrote Broder. "What finally resolved that economic crisis? World War II. [A showdown with the mullahs] will help [Obama] politically because the opposition party will be urging him on. And as tensions rise and we accelerate preparations for war, the economy will improve."

Upon Broder's death in March, Obama called him "the most respected and incisive political commentator of his generation." (New York Times, March 9)

Broder's statement shows an absolutely criminal mindset. It also shows a dangerous illusion. Broder calmly proposed the murder of tens of thousands of people, the devastation of entire cities, the destruction of a whole culture as a temporary economic fix to win a U.S. election.

Others commentators just as coldly argued with Broder that war with Iran would not be large enough, because all the weapons needed already exist and are in place. So no surge of military orders would follow. A larger war would be needed to give a big enough push!

In 1939 reviving shuttered U.S. steel, rubber and textile clothing plants with government orders for tanks, ships, jeeps, helmets, uniforms and life vests for sale to Europe was a big stimulus. The entry of the U.S. into World War II in 1941 provided an enormous surge of productive capacity that pulled the U.S. economy out of a 10-year economic depression. What worked as an economic stimulus 70 years ago, before the existence of the gargantuan, bloated, high-tech military-industrial complex, is long past.

Today the U.S. has a military machine and a military budget larger than that of the rest of the world combined, exceeding $1 trillion a year in stated and hidden costs, even without another war. It is guaranteed to grow at a rate of 5 percent to 10 percent a year. This is built into the Pentagon's budget projections even without cost overruns.

World won't bow to U.S. dictates

Washington's plans to easily conquer Afghanistan and Iraq and set up stable puppet regimes were frustrated. The U.S. plan for economic war on Iran has also exposed U.S. weaknesses.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner launched a tour of East Asian nations in early January to convince south Korea, China, India and Japan to cut their massive Iranian oil imports and abide by the sanctions.

China and India — both major economies — refused directly. China buys a third of Iran's oil exports.

The Obama administration said that the U.S. would offer countries that applied for a temporary waiver to continue oil purchases from Iran while they made other arrangements. An Indian cabinet minister said India will continue to do business with Iran. South Korea said it would apply for a U.S. waiver because it planned to increase oil purchases from Iran.

Japanese officials, when meeting with Geithner, seemed to agree. But after his departure Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba backtracked, saying, "The United States would like to impose sanctions. We believe it is necessary to be extremely circumspect about this matter." (AFP, Jan. 13)

Russia announced its refusal to comply with sanctions. So did NATO member Turkey. The European Union insisted on a six-month delay, due to fears of the economic consequences to debt-ridden Italy, Spain and Greece. The Greek government said it needs at least a year.

Saudi Arabia's crude oil contains more sulfur than lighter Iranian oil and requires substantially higher refining costs. In a time of global capitalist recession, this added cost is no easy sell.

Even outright U.S. collaborators are refusing Washington's demands. Pakistan, for example, refused to abandon a pipeline to transport Iranian natural gas into Pakistan and in the future even into India.

All of this would be good news. But the danger is that U.S. corporate power, seeing on every side its declining ability to ram through its dictates, is increasingly driven to military solutions.

This is exacerbated by U.S. setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan that have weakened the U.S. superpower's dominance of Southwest Asia relative to Iran. The more the U.S. loses its grip on the region, the more desperate imperialism may become to risk all in a mad adventure to recoup its past position.

Every voice must be raised at this urgent hour against sanctions and war. □

Iran's president visits ALBA countries

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to four countries in Latin America and the Caribbean highlights the commitment of the members of the Bolivarian Alliance of Our America (ALBA) to defy U.S. threats and act as sovereign, independent nations.

When Ahmadinejad's visit was first announced, U.S. State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland arrogantly warned: "We are making absolutely clear to countries around the world that now is not the time to be deepening ties, not security ties, not economic ties, with Iran." (AFP, Jan. 8)

The threat boomeranged. Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba and Ecuador all deepened and expanded their ties with that Islamic republic during the five-day whirlwind visit, with regard to politics, economy, energy, infrastructure, industry and nanotechnology.

President Ahmadinejad has visited Latin American at least five times since he took office in 2005. "Besides the embassies in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, México and Venezuela, Ahmadinejad opened new ones in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua and Uruguay. Bolivia chose to move its only embassy in the Middle East from Cairo to Teheran." (Le Monde Diplomatique) Iran's trade with Latin America tripled between 2008 and 2009, to nearly $3 billion.

First stop, Venezuela

Iran and Venezuela are both OPEC members. Arriving in Caracas on Jan. 8, Ahmadinejad and his ministers the next day reviewed old treaties and signed new ones in the areas of tourism, commerce, the environment, industry, energy, automotive technology, highway construction and science, including bioscience and nanotechnology, among others.

At a treaty signing ceremony, Ahmadinejad said: "The great capitalists of the world, ... to compete in their elections they wage wars. For them, the peoples' sovereignty is just a game in their elections campaign."

In relation to the nuclear weapons accusations by the U.S. against the Iranian Republic, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez said, "Without any proof they accuse Ahmadinejad of building atomic bombs, but how many atomic bombs does Israel have?" (Telesur, Jan. 9)

Both presidents pointed out that the U.S. is the real threat. President Chávez thanked the Iranians for contributing to build 26 food plants and 14,000 residences, with 7,000 planned in the city of Caribia.

Washington tried to sabotage the visit by expelling the Venezuelan consul in Miami, Livia Acosta Noguera, on Jan. 8, declaring her "persona non-grata" over the unfounded accusations in the documentary, "The Iranian Threat," aired by the Spanish station Univision. (dailymail.co.uk) Venezuelan Exterior Minister Nicolás Maduro called this "a destabilization plan" orchestrated by Venezuelan counterrevolutionaries in Miami. (Telesur) President Chávez then closed the Miami consular office.

Ahmadinejad meets Daniel Ortega, Fidel and Raúl Castro

By Jan. 10, Ahmadinejad was in Nicaragua for the inauguration of President Daniel Ortega's second term in office. The Sandinista leader won more than 62 percent of the vote in last November's election.

Nicaragua's relations with Iran have strengthened since Ortega took office in 2007. In Nicaragua, Iran helps with the construction of a deep-water port and in the creation of a hydroelectric power generation plant, both essential for the development of the country.

President Ortega said of the imperialists, "They still do not understand that it is necessary to find a real path to peace," adding that Iran does not have nuclear weapons. He called on the nations that have them, like the U.S. and Israel, to get rid of them. (Telesur)

During this second visit to Revolutionary Cuba, Ahmadinejad met with Fidel and Raúl Castro and held a conference at the University of Havana. "Raúl and Ahmadinejad ratified the commitment of both countries to the defense of peace, international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. They also reaffirmed their opposition to the application of unilateral economic sanctions." (cubadebate.cu)

Commenting on the capitalist system, Ahmadinejad stated: "The decadence of capitalism, a system based on injustice, exploitation of others' resources, and increased weaponry, [a system] which already is in a dead end alley in the political and economic scenarios, is unquestionable." (cubadebate.cu)

Relations between the two nations are excellent, and they cooperate in the areas of energy, biotechnology and trade.

In Fidel's recent "Reflections" on the Iranian president's visit, titled "World peace hanging by a thread," the Cuban communist examines the severe dangers from the sanctions against Iran and the recent killing of one of Iran's scientists: "Anyone would be shocked at the tranquility with which the United States and civilized Europe are promoting this campaign with incredible, systematic terrorist practices."

Ecuador, final stop

In Ecuador, Ahmadinejad arrived as the country was preparing to celebrate the fifth anniversary of its "Citizen's Revolution," as President Rafael Correa calls the process.

The Washington Post opened that day with an editorial attacking Correa, but the government and the people of Ecuador welcomed President Ahmadinejad quite warmly, with large crowds surrounding the Carondelet Palace, where the meeting was going on, shouting slogans and waving the Ecuadorean and Iranian flags. In Ecuador, 30 binational treaties were signed in the areas of energy, oil and food.

But besides these agreements, another important development took place. Both nations decided to create a "Common Front" to defend the countries and peoples threatened by the imperialist powers.

Correa stressed that Ecuador is "very concerned" by the imperialist intimidation against the nuclear policy carried out by Iran, and he condemned the double standards of the powers that "have not signed the Treaty of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons which Iran signed." (Telesur)

Guided by historic memory, the people of these four countries welcome the friendly association with Iran. Simón Bolívar in 1824 wrote, "The United States appears to be destined by Providence to plague [Latin] America with misery." And so it has, massacring and exploiting the people of the South and stealing their resources. It is only logical that the people of Latin America no longer look north for friendly relations. □

Groups demand U.S. hands off Iran

Stop the campaign of terror against Iran and its scientists

The following statement was issued by Ramsey Clark, former U.S. attorney general and co-founder and representative of the International Action Center:

Another Iranian scientist, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, has been assassinated in Iran by a car bomb. This is the fifth Iranian scientist targeted by assassins working in Iran in two years. Four attacks succeeded. This is a deadly escalation of the covert criminal activities conducted by the U.S., Israel and their terrorists and domestic spies in Iran against the government and people of Iran.

While Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has denied any U.S. involvement, the important and undeniable truth is that the governments of the U.S. and Israel have openly declared Iran as an enemy and have publicly stated that they will use all means necessary, not excluding military attack, to change the Iranian government using Iran's efforts to produce nuclear energy as an excuse.

The assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists is an effort to create fear in the Iranian people, opposition to their own government and to monopolize nuclear research and development of nuclear power. The aim is to stop Iran's drive for industrial and technological independence on which the independence of Iran and the freedom of its people depend.

Those who forget the past are condemned to its repetition. Do we remember that the Shah, who ruled Iran for 25 years on behalf of the U.S., had a huge nuclear energy program intended to replace depleted fossil fuels? Do we realize his billions of dollars of arms purchased from the U.S. with the wealth of the Iranian people helped fund the U.S arms research, development and production that now threaten Iran?

In the decades since the Shah fled, sanctions, sabotage and threats have escalated into dangerous new decisions to send a U.S. nuclear aircraft carrier, destroyers and nuclear submarines into the Persian Gulf and impose harsher sanctions on trade, and an oil embargo. All of these threats are threats against peace and violations of international law.

A just society can have no interest in stopping the peaceful progress of other nations and peoples.

No to another war for oil, no to foreign government domination and foreign corporate exploitation of Iran, or any other country.

We urge all who oppose another war of ever greater massive destruction and death to speak out in this hour of maximum peril.

UNAC statement on assassination of Iranian scientist and growing U.S. war threats

The following is an edited excerpt from a statement issued Jan. 16 by the United National Antiwar Coalition:

Another Iranian scientist has been assassinated in Iran by a car bombing. ... This is a dangerous escalation of the covert activities conducted by the CIA and Israeli intelligence and their domestic spies in Iran against the government and people of Iran.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated, "I want to categorically deny any United States involvement in any kind of act of violence inside Iran." However, both the Israeli and the [U.S.] governments have admitted to covert activity in Iran. Irrespective of the actors, the assassinations of law-abiding scientists living and working in Iran is a reprehensible act that should be condemned by all.

Considering that Hillary Clinton threatened Iran with military attack, it is disingenuous for her to state that the U.S. denies involvement in any act of violence within Iran. A military attack on Iran, especially an attack on Iran's nuclear energy facilities, would produce results similar to a nuclear attack (U.S. Concerned Scientists report). It would be the most violent act against the people of Iran, resulting in hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths.

It is extremely important that all international and especially U.S. antiwar and progressive organizations condemn these acts of assassination of innocent citizens and all forms of violent and aggressive actions by the U.S., Israel and the Iranian opposition.

Condemn the assassination of Iranian scientists. End all sanctions against Iran. End covert activities inside Iran. End all war threats against Iran. □

Remembering war on Gaza

San Diego

Al-Awda San Diego, joined by many other local activist and progressive groups, held a demonstration and candlelight vigil Jan. 14 to commemorate the third anniversary of the 22-day genocidal attack on the 1.5 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip. The U.S.-supported Israeli forces had sealed off Gaza to prevent residents from fleeing the massacre. They then killed 1,417 Palestinians, including 352 children, and seriously wounded 5,300.

As during the past years' commemorative actions, the assembled supporters of Palestine in San Diego's historic Balboa Park were confronted by Zionist counter-protesters. Al-Awda leader Zahi Damuni pointed out to the local media covering the event that although the Zionists were fully aware of the somber nature of the concluding vigil — which followed a march through the park — they danced and sang while the names and ages of the 352 dead children were read aloud a few yards away.

— Report and photo by Bob McCubbin

WORKERS WORLD editorials

The dogs of war

Already this year the U.S. Armed Forces showed once more why they should never have gone into Afghanistan and why they should get out now.

Someone videoed four U.S. Marines urinating on Afghan corpses. It's unknown if these were dead fighters or civilians. Someone posted the video. It went viral.

Washington and the Pentagon had a problem.

In the U.S. military's 10 years plus in Afghanistan its troops have committed much worse war crimes. They've invaded houses and murdered, pillaged and raped. Its planes and now its drones regularly wipe out wedding parties. Usually the top dogs cover up the crimes.

But such a viral video has repercussions. It shouts out to every Afghan — and implies to a billion Muslims and 3 billion Asians — that the U.S. military holds them in contempt. The Taliban fighters, every one of the 27 million Afghans, even those in the puppet government in Kabul, know that their U.S. "ally" considers them subhumans. That's a big problem.

So Washington answered with a spasm of hypocrisy. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton expressed her "total dismay," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta called it "utterly deplorable," and the chair of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Martin Dempsey, said it was "contrary to the values of a professional military."

Bull. The truth is that the actions of the four Marines were the logical result of the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan.

U.S. imperialist power imparts an arrogance from the top of the government that works its way down to the troops at the bottom. Pentagon brainwashing reinforces this attitude by purposely dehumanizing the enemy, who are poor, foreign and speak a different language. The Army and Marine officers use racist terms to refer to the "enemy" and therefore to all the occupied people.

There are investigations underway of two possible murders by U.S. troops of Asian-American GIs who were singled out for racist persecution. That's how deep racist indoctrination goes.

No, Gen. Dempsey, contempt for the enemy is consistent with the values of professional killers in a military that serves the super-rich of the world while trying to repress everyone else. Its every action is a war crime.

Zuma criticizes UN over war on Libya

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

In his speech assuming the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council for the Republic of South Africa, President Jacob Zuma criticized the U.N. for its stance that led to the eight-month war against Libya.

South Africa had voted in favor of U.N. Resolution 1973, which authorized a so-called "no-fly zone over Libya; however, the action was clearly designed to engineer the destruction of the country and the overthrow of the government of Col. Moammar Gadhafi.

After the bombing by the United States and NATO started over Libya on March 19, South Africa and other African Union member-states demanded an immediate ceasefire and drafted a road map for national reconciliation inside the country. These efforts by the A.U. were rejected by the imperialist states and their allies, including the NATO-backed "rebels."

The U.S. and NATO countries imposed a naval blockade on Libya, froze its foreign assets and carried out over 10,000 air strikes against the country of 6 million people. The NATO aggressor states recognized and continuously supported the National Transitional Council "rebels" with no democratic mandate from the Libyan people.

Zuma told the Security Council on Jan. 12, "A problem which was confined to one country, Libya, has now grown to be a regional problem. The lesson we should draw from the Libyan experience is that greater political coherence and a common vision between the African Union and the U.N. are critical in the resolution of African conflicts." (Associated Press, Jan. 12)

The South African president continued, "It is important that an international organization like the United Nations take into account the realities on the local level when it takes a decision."

U.S. spokespeople Susan Rice and Mark Kornblau took issue with Zuma's statement, claiming, without any real evidence, that the intervention prevented a massacre of Libyan civilians.

Meanwhile, the U.S./NATO war displaced hundreds of thousands of people inside Libya and killed thousands of civilians, robbed the North African state of hundreds of billions of dollars and installed a dictatorial regime of armed rebels who have imprisoned at least 7,000 people without just cause.

Instability continues

Since the assassination of Gadhafi on Oct. 22, right after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called for his elimination, clashes between various armed militias have resulted in greater insecurity and deaths inside Libya. On Jan. 13-15, clashes between rival rebel groups left two people dead and 39 injured in Gharyan, which is located approximately 50 miles south of the capital of Tripoli.

Despite repeated orders from the NTC rebel regime, the militias have refused to surrender their arms and join a newly created national army. Earlier in January, a major conflict erupted in Tripoli when a group of militiamen from the city of Misrata exchanged anti-aircraft and machine gun fire with other rebels claiming to be from the central section of the capital.

Divisions among the NTC rebels and other forces that opposed the Gadhafi government were revealed when 12 Islamist parties rejected a proposed electoral law issued by the Western-backed government. Several groups criticized the draft law published on Jan. 2, saying that it would encourage tribalism and provide disproportionate influence to the wealthy sections of society.

The so-called Forum of National Parties opposed the draft law, saying, "The proposed electoral system does not lead to true representation of all sectors of society, instead it would produce a representation overwhelmed by tribal consideration and the influence of the rich."

Wasila al-Ashiq, who is the leader of one of the parties, called al-Umma, stated, "We should not be voting for x or y, but candidates should join a party with clear political objectives." (News24, Jan.15) Al-Ashiq noted that under the proposed system, "the larger tribes will gain all the seats and minorities such as the Berbers will be ignored."

The system that was overthrown under Gadhafi, known as the Jamahiriya, was based on people's committees and local representation. Under Gadhafi's rule, between 1969 and 2011, Libya rose to achieve the highest standard of living on the African continent. The country at the time of the imperialist-engineered war had over $160 billion in foreign assets and owed no money to the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

The former government had assisted the national development of Libya, which attracted 2 million guest workers and provided investments to other states on the African continent. Libya under Gadhafi had also been a strong advocate of the formation of a United States of Africa, an idea that was advanced during the 1950s and 1960s by the late Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah, who was also overthrown in 1966 by a CIA-backed military and police coup.

Several of Gadhafi's family members were killed by the NATO bombings and rebel forces. His son and heir apparent, Seif al-Islam, is currently being held incommunicado by the NTC rebels at an undisclosed location inside the country. □

Mundo Obrero

EE.UU. intensifica movidas guerreristas contra Irán

Continua de página 12

8 de enero por cuatro países de América Latina empezando por Venezuela.

Panetta y el general Dempsey en 'Face the Nation'

El secretario de defensa estadounidense Leon Panetta, habló en el programa "Face the Nation" de la cadena CBS el 8 de enero, donde dijo: "¿Están tratando de desarrollar un arma nuclear? No, pero sabemos que ellos están tratando de desarrollar una capacidad nuclear. Y eso es lo que nos preocupa. Y nuestra línea roja a Irán es: no desarrollen un arma nuclear. Esa es una línea roja para nosotros".

Panetta tenía que reflejar los resultados de dos estudios en 2007 y 2010, por agencias de inteligencia de los Estados Unidos, que concluyeron que "los dirigentes iraníes aún no habían hecho ninguna decisión política para construir un arma". (New York Times, 8 de enero)

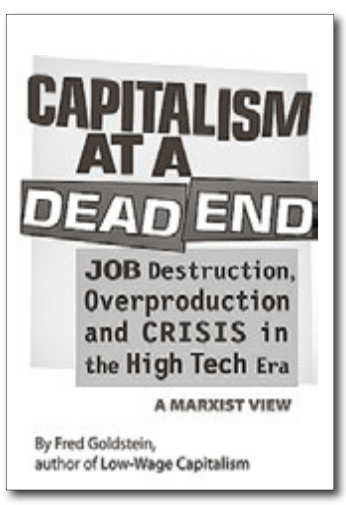
El general Martin Dempsey, presidente del estado mayor conjunto, dijo en el mismo programa que el Pentágono estaba evaluando los riesgos y dificultades de "sacar" las centrales nucleares de Irán para "desplegar activos militares, para proporcionar estas opciones en el momento oportuno. (New York Times, 8 de enero)

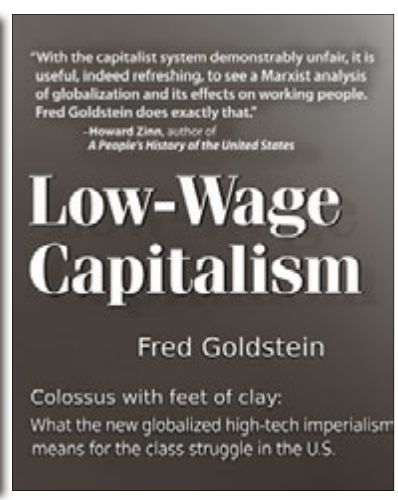
Entre esos activos está la Quinta Flota, estacionada en Bahréin a sólo cientos de kilómetros del Estrecho de Ormuz. Esta consiste de portaaviones, submarinos nucleares, las unidades anfibias de los Marines, destructores, fragatas y aviones de combate. Los británicos también están enviando un portaaviones al Golfo.

Algunos analistas sostienen que el impacto potencial de batallas en el Estrecho de Ormuz durante la crisis económica capitalista, junto a todas las tensiones en las fuerzas armadas estadounidenses, hace poco probable que Washington lance otra guerra. Sin embargo, la historia del imperialismo es que incluso las más arriesgadas aventuras pueden ocurrir en momentos de crisis, como lo demuestran las dos guerras mundiales del siglo XX.

Las principales coaliciones anti-guerra tratan el peligro de guerra seriamente. La Coalición Nacional Unida Contra la Guerra (United National Antiwar Coalition) en los Estados Unidos y la coalición Alto a la Guerra (Stop the War) en Bretaña, que incluyen organizaciones con diversas evaluaciones de las políticas internas de Teherán, se oponen activamente a las sanciones imperialistas y a todas las provocaciones militares contra Irán.

Para obtener más información y para unirse a las protestas contra las políticas estadounidenses, consulte la sección de Irán del Centro de Acción Internacional (International Action Center) en iacenter.org. □





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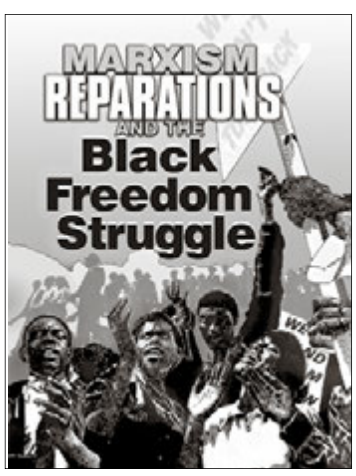

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As Koreans mourn death of leader

Regime in south outlaws sympathy with north

By Deirdre Griswold

The U.S. media and political authorities unanimously ridiculed the intense emotions that were displayed in public by the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the sudden death of their leader, Kim Jong Il. How could such grief be genuine, they asked, implying that somehow the socialist government in the north forced people to weep in public as Kim's funeral cortege drove by.

This cynical interpretation of the feelings of Koreans on the death of their leader makes no sense, especially given the fact — mostly ignored by the media here — that thousands of people in the south of Korea felt exactly the same way. In fact, the south Korean regime of Lee Myung-bak had its hands full stopping citizens in the south from sending condolence messages to the government in the north.

The Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK reported many instances of organizations and individuals either being prevented from traveling to the north to express condolences or being interrogated for writing such sentiments in online posts.

For example, the South Headquarters of the Pan-National Alliance for Korea's Reunification (Pomminryon) was investigated by police for phone conversations praising Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un.

A group of elders from Pomminryon, including Chairman Ra Chang Sun, Kang Sun Jong and Ri Chon Jae, tried to travel to Panmunjom, on the north side of the demilitarized zone that separates Korea. They made no secret of it, holding up placards saying, "We are making a journey to pay a consolatory visit in the spirit of June 15" and "How can the 'government' disallow consolatory visits?"

The spirit of June 15 refers to the day in 2000 when a Joint Declaration was signed by both the north and south to allow greater contact between the Korean people. That declaration has been virtually nullified by the present right-wing Lee regime in the south, which has returned to rigidly enforcing the hated National Security Law that bans any sympathies with the north.

The elders were blocked by police and army soldiers when they reached a checkpoint in Gyeonggi Province, near the border. They were defiant and shouted, "Step aside!" and "We are going to pave the way for promoting inter-Korean reconciliation through this visit. Why are you standing in our way?" But the police and soldiers stopped them from going any further.

Hwang Hye Ro, co-representative of Korea Solidarity for Independent Reunification and Democracy in south Korea, did get to Pyongyang, the capital of the north, to join in the mourning. The south Korean authorities then issued a warrant for her arrest, charging that she had visited the northern half of her own country, Korea, without permission from the regime in the south.

For those U.S. readers trained to disbelieve what the DPRK's news sources report, this rigidly repressive stance of the south Korean regime was verified in an article in the Jan. 7 New York Times. Entitled "South Korean Law Casts Wide Net," the article focused on the regime's spying on its people's use of the Internet, which has resulted in arrests and interrogation of those who expressed admiration for the north or its leaders.

The Times article points out that for decades "South Korea's military dictators used the National Security Law not only to prosecute spies but also to persecute political dissidents. Between 1961 and 2002, at least 13,178 people were indicted, and 182 of them executed, under the law, according to human rights groups. ... The law makes it a crime to praise, sympathize or cooperate with North Korea if such acts threaten national security. But it is so vaguely worded that, decades ago, even people who might have praised North Korea while drunk were hauled in for interrogation."

Now the law is being used to investigate bloggers who praise the DPRK or just download material from websites in the north.

What seems to concern the Times writer the most is that zealous south Korean prosecutors are hauling in people whose praise may have been meant in jest or as satire. But what about the rights of those who really do admire the north and its leaders?

Millions of Koreans, north and south, revere Kim Il Sung, who led the country's struggle for independence from Japanese colonial rule, and later stood up against U.S. imperialism's three-year war that tried to bring all of Korea under its dominion. They rejoice in the fact that Kim's emphasis on self-determination — called Juche — has been carried forward by his descendants.

At a time when the White House and Pentagon have just declared an increase in U.S. military might in the Pacific, including their bases in Korea, it is very understandable that Koreans should mourn the death of Kim Jong Il, who mobilized the people to strengthen their defenses even as he tried mightily to bring about reconciliation between north and south. □

Why People's Korea should be defended

By Stephen Millies

Is there another country more demonized by the U.S. government and corporate media than the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, also known as north Korea?

The 1% need to lie about oppressed countries and peoples to justify wars and massacres.

The lies told about John Africa and the MOVE organization paved the way for the May 13, 1985, holocaust in Philadelphia. Five children and six adults were killed after Philadelphia police — helped by the Pentagon and FBI — dropped a bomb on the MOVE house.

The only adult survivor, Ramona Africa, was then sent to prison for seven years.

From 1950 to 1953, all of Korea was turned into a MOVE house by the Pentagon. At least 3 million Koreans were killed. Hundreds of thousands were burned alive by napalm. The 400,000 people in north Korea's capital of Pyongyang had 420,000 bombs dropped on them.

South Korea's Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimated that south Korean puppet Syngman Rhee executed 100,000 to 200,000 political prisoners.

Despite these massacres, the U.S. war machine wasn't able to conquer the DPRK. Chinese volunteers fought beside their Korean sisters and brothers. Among the Chinese soldiers who gave their lives for Korea was Mao Anying, a son of Mao Zedong.

Wall Street continues to occupy south Korea and targets north Korea with nuclear weapons.

The U.S. Army's Yongsan Garrison occupies 620 acres in the middle of Seoul, south Korea. It's as if a foreign army occupied Central Park in New York City. What sort of independence is that?

146 years of U.S. aggression against Korea

The capitalist media won't tell you that the heavily armed U.S. merchant ship "General Sherman" tried attacking Pyongyang in 1866. The invaders were thrown back.

Ulysses S. Grant, whose troops won the U.S. Civil War, capitulated to the defeated Southern slavocracy after he became president, refusing to give land to formerly enslaved people who had tilled it for generations. Yet he sent warships to Korea in 1871, trying to open it up to U.S. markets. More than 200 Korean soldiers were killed defending their country.

This U.S. invasion helped open the door for Japanese aggression against Korea in 1876. In 1905, President Teddy Roosevelt practically gave Korea to Japan in the peace treaty he brokered between the Russian czar and Japanese emperor.

At least a quarter of the human beings incinerated by the U.S. in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 were Korean slave laborers. The same U.S. military-industrial complex that dropped these atom bombs refused to drop any bombs on the German railroads that the Nazis used to transport millions to their deaths in Auschwitz.

Socialists should defend the oppressed

The history of the Korean people fighting back should be known and spread widely by socialists. But very little of that appears in a long article called "Socialism in one dynasty," by David Whitehouse, recently published by the International Socialist Organization in their newspaper, the Socialist Worker.

Instead, Whitehouse attacks People's Korea, using gossip and phrases lifted from the capitalist media. He also complains that in the DPRK, "the state has to provide health care, education and housing, because there are no institutions outside the state. ..." (socialistworker.org, Jan. 12)

WW Commentary

This sounds like Ron Paul or the Tea Party attacking Medicare and Social Security. Millions of poor people and unemployed workers would love it if they were provided by the government with jobs, health care, education and housing instead of being fired and evicted by the capitalists.

One of the article's sources is Atlantic magazine, which was a big cheerleader for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Michael Kelly, the Atlantic's editor, was killed while participating in the assault.

The Whitehouse article attacks WWP, the Freedom Road Socialist Organization and the Party for Socialism and Liberation for defending the DPRK. He calls it "satire" that WWP sent condolences to the Workers' Party of Korea upon the recent death of its leader, Kim Jong Il.

As communists in the belly of the imperialist beast, Workers World Party respects all leaders of people fighting the U.S. empire.

Mocking oppressed people and their leaders is nothing new. John Africa, Marcus Garvey and Kim Jong Il were all ridiculed by the capitalist media. It should be ABC that socialists shouldn't repeat the slanders of the 1%.

Korea and Cuba, two revolutionary beacons

Korea has a rich revolutionary history. Two million Koreans joined the March 1, 1919, movement for independence from Japanese rule. More than 7,000 were killed.

The Korean people launched an armed struggle for freedom. The most famous guerrilla commander was communist leader Kim Il Sung, the grandfather of north Korea's new leader, Kim Jong Un. After Che Guevara toured the world in 1960, he said that the most remarkable person he met was Kim Il Sung.

But you won't find any pictures of Che Guevara in the Socialist Worker newspaper. Cuba, like People's Korea, isn't considered to be socialist by this grouping. In fact, there isn't any country that had a socialist revolution that's considered socialist by the ISO.

The group supported the Libyan "rebels" who lynched Black people while serving as front men for the U.S./NATO invasion of the African country.

Leningrad, the cradle of the Russian Revolution, endured a 900-day siege during World War II. At least 1 million people died there of starvation and disease. But Leningrad never surrendered to the German imperialists.

The DPRK has been besieged for decades. Great hardships have been endured since the Soviet Union was overthrown in 1991. The U.S. was able to cut off much of the north's foreign trade, including oil supplies. But Koreans, like the people of Leningrad, will never surrender.

In a besieged fortress, unity is essential. The Workers' Party of Korea won't allow imperialists to split their country. That is why the DPRK should be congratulated for its swift action in naming Kim Jong Un to succeed Kim Jong Il as the leader. □

lavender & red

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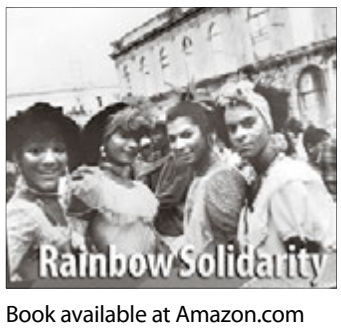

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CELAC: Un paso adelante para la región, con contradicciones

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Este nuevo año de 2012 promete ser interesante para la región al sur del Río Grande. El establecimiento formal de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y del Caribe (CELAC) en Caracas, Venezuela, marca un acontecimiento excitante, aunque no desprovisto de dificultades y contradicciones.

Los días 2 y 3 de diciembre, delegaciones y jefes/as de estado de los 33 países independientes en América Latina y el Caribe se reunieron para discutir y aprobar un histórico y ambicioso programa de integración regional y colaboración en la esfera política, económica, social y cultural. Esta sería la primera vez que estos países se reunirían en una organización sin la presencia de Estados Unidos y Canadá.

Esta aprobación en sí es un gigantesco paso adelante para una región a la cual Washington desde la doctrina Monroe de 1823 ha considerado su "patio trasero" y "propiedad exclusiva". Que tantos gobiernos políticamente disímiles puedan reunirse bajo una misma organización es un logro increíble.

La idea de CELAC había estado desarrollándose durante años. Se aceleró después de que la Organización de Estados Americanos fracasara en adoptar medidas enérgicas contra el golpe de estado en junio de 2009 en Honduras que derrocó al presidente Manuel Zelaya y el intento de golpe de estado contra el presidente ecuatoriano Rafael Correa en 2010. Considerando las campañas imperialistas que se están gestando contra Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia y Ecuador, la CELAC ahora es aún más importante.

Para comenzar a analizar el potencial de la CELAC, hay que colocarla en el contexto de la crisis económica y financiera mundial. Aunque afectada por la crisis, se ha aceptado generalmente que a la región que abarca la CELAC le ha ido mejor que otras partes del mundo.

El presidente cubano Raúl Castro dijo en su discurso de apertura en Caracas: "La reciente evolución económica de América Latina y el Caribe muestra que, a pesar de la profunda crisis global, han crecido los ingresos por exportaciones, principalmente de productos básicos; que la carga de la deuda externa, aunque injusta y agobiante, ha sido menor, y que se ha incrementado la acumulación de reservas. Este escenario nos brinda una oportunidad si actuamos con responsabilidad y verdadero espíritu solidario". (http://www.cubavision.icrt.cu)

¿Qué contradicciones hay en CELAC?

Esta realidad, no obstante, subraya las diferencias dentro de la región. ¿Quien se ha beneficiado de estos ingresos? ¿Cuáles son las contradicciones dentro de la CELAC?

Cuba, donde no hay el 1% superrico, y Venezuela, donde el gobierno de Hugo Chávez está tratando de iniciar el camino hacia la transformación socialista del país, son miembros de CELAC, como también Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica, México y Panamá — países con gobiernos derechistas aliados estrechamente a Washington y donde las ganancias no están reinvertidas en beneficio del pueblo.

Está Haití, donde las fuerzas productivas están menos desarrolladas, junto a Brasil que tiene la economía más grande y cuyas fuerzas militares son todavía parte de la Misión para la Estabilización en Haití (Minustah) de la ONU, considerada por los/as haitianos/as como una fuerza de ocupación.

Menos en Cuba revolucionaria, en todos los otros países de la CELAC la clase capitalista todavía controla los sectores principales de la economía, aún en las sociedades más progresistas como la de Venezuela, Bolivia y Ecuador. Puede ser que el poder de la burguesía esté en declive como resultado de la política establecida por los gobiernos progresistas y los levantamientos de las masas, pero es todavía una fuerza aliada principalmente al capital financiero y compañías transnacionales.

Sin embargo, la volatilidad de la economía estadounidense y ahora la de la zona del euro, y el aumento del comercio de muchos países de la CELAC con países que Washington considera sus adversarios — por ejemplo China — podría hacer que esta misma burguesía viera a la CELAC como una manera de aumentar sus ganancias y asegurar su futuro.

Estados Unidos, aunque no es parte de la CELAC, tratará de influirla a través de los susodichos aliados y sus bien financiadas ONGes en países progresistas como Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, y Ecuador.

¡Puerto Rico, ausente!

Un país, Puerto Rico, no fue invitado a ser miembro de la CELAC. Al ser colonia de Estados Unidos, la isla no cumplía con el criterio de ser una nación independiente y soberana. La única voz que representó a Borinquén fue la de Calle 13, un conjunto puertorriqueño que ha ganado 19 premios Grammy de música latina y que aboga por la independencia de la nación. Calle 13 dio un concierto, acompañado por la Orquesta Juvenil Bolivariana de Venezuela bajo la batuta del famoso director musical Gustavo Dudamel.

Dudamel es producto del Sistema de Orquestas que enseña música a niños/as pobres en la República Bolivariana. El acto fue uno fabuloso que refleja el objetivo de integración cultural de la CELAC. Durante su concierto, René Pérez, el cantante principal de Calle 13, habló contra el colonialismo impuesto en su patria y la necesidad de integración de toda Latinoamérica.

Socialismo, la única manera para lograr la integración verdadera

Antes de que ocurrieran los levantamientos el año pasado en Túnez, Egipto y Bahréin, y antes de las manifestaciones y huelgas masivas en algunos países europeos y Ocupar Wall Street en EE.UU., los movimientos en Latinoamérica habían sido la vanguardia de los levantamientos populares a nivel internacional.

Está más allá del alcance de este artículo el evaluar la situación actual en toda Latinoamérica. El hecho de que una CELAC pudo establecerse en este momento, es el resultado mayormente de los movimientos progresistas de los pueblos de la región. Estos movimientos pusieron en el gobierno administraciones que responden más al pueblo que a las corporaciones transnacionales. Estos gobiernos a su vez, forjaron el establecimiento de la CELAC.

También es importante recordar, sin embargo, que hasta que la estructura capitalista sea remplazada por el socialismo, el poder de estos gobiernos para llevar a cabo la política progresista estará en correlación directa a la fuerza del lado de los/as trabajadores/as en la lucha de clase. Dejados a su voluntad, los capitalistas siempre tratarán de reprimir la lucha de las masas y cualquier avance progresista de las masas. Mientras el poder económico de una nación quede en las manos de los ricos, el presidente será siempre una figura con poder limitado.

Solamente un gobierno donde el poder esté verdaderamente en la clase trabajadora, puede garantizar un sistema con justicia social y económica. □

EE.UU. intensifica movidas guerreristas contra Irán

Por John Catalinotto

11 de enero — Al comenzar el año 2012, las acciones y las amenazas de Washington dieron sustancia a los planes de guerra que por mucho tiempo el imperialismo estadounidense ha tenido contra Irán. Las acciones tomadas incluyeron sanciones con miras a romper la economía de Irán, el despliegue de buques de guerra frente a las costas de Irán y planes para ejercicios bélicos conjuntos con Israel.

El 31 de diciembre, el presidente Barack Obama firmó una ley de financiamiento militar que incluía la imposición de sanciones a los países o empresas que compren petróleo iraní y paguen por ello a través del banco central de Irán. El petróleo es la fuente principal de ingresos de Irán. Los países imperialistas europeos también están preparando un embargo del petróleo iraní. Estas graves sanciones económicas equivalen a un acto de guerra.

A pesar de su excesivo arsenal nuclear, EE.UU. — y sus aliados imperialistas europeos y el estado colonizador israelí — afirman que su conflicto en la región petrolífera del suroeste de Asia proviene de los pasos que Irán está dando para enriquecer uranio. Sin pruebas, acusan a Irán de tener un programa de armas nucleares.

El ejército israelí anunció el 5 de enero que miles de soldados estadounidenses e israelitas tendrían un ejercicio muy importante en enero. "Tanto los funcionarios israelíes como los estadounidenses dijeron que el ejercicio sería el más grande realizado conjuntamente por ambos países." (Washington Post, 5 de enero) El Estado de Israel, que se dice que posee por lo menos 200 armas nucleares, a menudo amenaza con atacar el programa de energía nuclear de Irán.

EE.UU. hostil desde la revolución de 1979

Pero Washington ha sido hostil en palabra y obra al gobierno iraní desde que un levantamiento popular derrocó el régimen del shah en febrero de 1979. La CIA había puesto a este monarca en el poder con un golpe de estado en 1953. Él siguió siendo un dictador cliente de los EE.UU. hasta esta revolución.

Israel es hostil a Irán porque Teherán también ha apoyado los movimientos de liberación en la región: el Hizbolá en el Líbano — que sacó al ejército israelí en el año 2000 y detuvo la invasión israelí en 2006 — y Hamás en Palestina, y además es un aliado de Siria.

La masiva revolución de 1979 no logró derrocar las relaciones de propiedad capitalista o poner fin a la explotación del trabajo. En su lugar, puso en el poder a una sección de la clase capitalista de Irán en la forma de República Islámica. Hasta ahora, ese gobierno ha defendido los intereses económicos y políticos de esta clase de la agresión imperialista.

Las fuerzas armadas iraníes, a partir del 24 de diciembre llevaron a cabo 10 días de ejercicios en el Estrecho de Ormuz. Este es un cuerpo estrecho de agua — alrededor de 40 millas de ancho — entre Irán y Omán que conecta el Golfo Pérsico / Arábigo al Mar de Omán y de allí al Océano Índico.

Alrededor del 20 por ciento del suministro mundial de petróleo navega por el Estrecho de Ormuz. El gobierno iraní dijo que podría verse obligado a bloquear el estrecho en respuesta a las sanciones dirigidas a estrangular a su pueblo. El comandante del Ejército iraní. Brig. General Habibollah Sayyari dijo que el país puede bloquear el estrecho de Ormuz "fácilmente". (ISNA, 8 de enero)

Un conflicto en el estrecho inmediatamente cortaría el suministro de petróleo a nivel mundial y se inflarían los precios del petróleo.

Los iraníes también anunciaron que estaban a punto de comenzar la producción de uranio enriquecido en un segundo lugar — en la planta de Fordo, cerca de la ciudad de Qom. El sitio se encuentra a 300 pies bajo tierra y está bien defendido por armas antiaéreas.

El gobierno iraní ha declarado que no tiene planes de fabricar armas nucleares. Irán insiste sin embargo, que tiene el derecho de producir uranio enriquecido como fuente de energía alternativa al petróleo que aunque posee grandes cantidades, no es infinito.

A pesar de la crisis, el presidente iraní Mahmoud Ahmadinejad inició una gira el

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